THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

A GOOD many persons in the plain, little Sunday-school room that evening wondered, when Elder Green began speaking of the "sin against the Holy Ghost," explaining, in his slow, lumbering manner, how Jesus charged that sin upon the men who said that He did his gracious works by the power of Satan. Elder Green was not fluent, and the subject seemed too deep for a prayer-meeting talk.

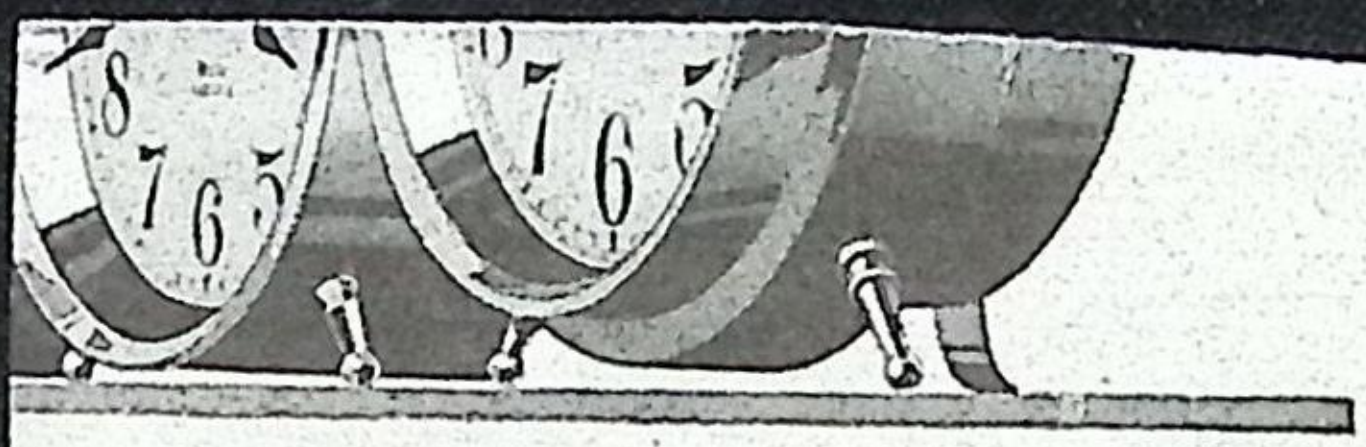
"Hundreds of folks must have heard the Lord's preaching and gone away without giving heed to it," he continued after a painfully long pause. "I like to think that a few of those may have come back later on, and if they *did* they'd find the very same Saviour they turned their backs on a while before. They hadn't heeded what He said, but they hadn't tried to belie Him and pull Him down.

"But these Jews, now, who said that Jesus did the Devil's works, why, they upset everything for themselves and for others. Even if their sins pressed home by 'n' by, what had they left to go to if Jesus was what they thought He was? It'd be like you or me going off into a wild, dangerous country and breaking down all the bridges behind us, and tearing up the road. No matter how sick we might be of our reckless trip, there wouldn't be any way out."

Elder Green cleared his throat, and his kindly old eyes glimpsed the growing interest in the faces before him. "I knew a man in my younger days who was a church member and, I believe, a Christian, although now and again he'd fall under the power of temptation and get drunk. I don't justify him, and he never tried to justify himself. That's the main reason why I thought better of him than I did of some. He didn't pass his sin off as a little slip, but got down in the dust before God and confessed it for what it was. He kept the Christian standard up even if he fell below it himself.

"I have another man in mind who'd be scandalized to hear himself mentioned in the same breath with the first one. He kept his Christian life consistent, in his own eyes, by pulling down the plain teaching of the gospel, here and there, so's it would fit his measure. He had quarrels with his neighbors, and held grudges against this one and that one; but he always reasoned out that those particular persons weren't neighbors at all, and that Christ's law of forgiveness didn't apply to the cases he was mixed with. He'd worked out a theory that business had rules of its own, and between these rules and the law of God he always managed to leave a loophole for himself.

"Suppose at the last minute that man had wanted to make good with God. What could he go back to? He'd reasoned away God's plain truth until there was nothing but a shadow left. 'Pears to me it would be something like the case of the Jews who called the loving Saviour of the world a minion of Satan. Jesus called that the unpardonable sin." The short pause here was impressive. "It sounds like a hard saying, but how can a man miss getting beyond pardon when there's just one way pardon comes, and he willfully hews it to pieces?"



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